

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## VERONICA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE."

IN FIVE BOOKS.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER VI. LONELY.

THE prince was a little near-sighted, and not deeming it good manners to use the glass that dangled by the black ribbon over his waistcoat, when he found himself face to face with "miladi," he had approached to within a short distance of her before he became aware of the agitated expression of her face, and the unusual carelessness of her toilet.

The instinct of coquetry would have prevented Veronica from presenting herself before Barletti in any unbecoming attire. But if she had given the matter her most serious consideration, she could have found none better calculated to set off her striking beauty than that which she now wore. A long white wrapper fell to her feet. She had covered her head with the voluminous folds of a white lace shawl, one end of which was thrown across her breast and fell over her shoulder: and beneath the delicate snowy lace her long black hair streamed rippling to her waist.

"Oh, prince, there you are!" said Veronica. "Paul told me you were in the west loggia, and I ran down to catch you before I dressed for dinner."

The words were flattering, inasmuch as they implied great eagerness on the lady's part to see him. But he must have been a fatuously vain man who could have looked in Veronica's face as she spoke and have supposed her to be thinking of paying him compliments.

Barletti bowed, and stood awaiting what more she had to say.

"Have you seen Paul?"

"Yes, signora. I saw him as I came in, but I did not speak to him."

"Then you do not know that Sir John has been, and still is, ill?"

"Dio buono! Ill? No. I know nothing. What is the matter with ce bon Gale?"

"I hope it is nothing serious: but I cannot tell. I am uneasy about him; very uneasy."

Barletti did not believe that miladi could be suffering any acute anxiety on the score of her lord's health. And he would have considered it *a priori* very unlikely that she should so suffer. But he thought it highly proper and becoming that she should assume anxiety. A frank show of indifference would have disgusted him.

"Oh you must not alarm yourself, cara signora," he said, soothingly. "What are the symptoms? How long has he been ill? I wonder that Paul said nothing to me!"

Veronica hurriedly described the singular swoon or trance into which Sir John had fallen. "He says the heat made him faint," she added, "but——" And she shook her head doubtfully.

"Really it is not unlikely," said Barletti. "It may have been a *giramento di capo*—a mere swimming of the head. Such things are not uncommon, and il nostro caro Gale is not very strong. Pray tell me if there is anything I can do for you in Florence. I shall, of course, go back at once. I could not think of intruding on you under the circumstances."

"No, no, no! That is just the very thing I hastened down to say. You must remain and dine here, and stay all the evening until Sir John retires."

"But—would he not prefer——" began

Barletti in some astonishment. Veronica interrupted him, speaking very fast, and in a low tone, and glancing round nervously to see that they were not observed.

"Yes; no doubt he would prefer that you should go away. But I prefer that you should stay. I beg you to stay. He has a whim to disguise that he is ill. He will not have a doctor. He has given Paul orders to keep it secret from the servants. It may be nothing, but I am so inexperienced in illness, I cannot judge. I am alone here. I am afraid of—of—the responsibility. You must remain and watch him, and let me know what you think. And—listen—do not allow it to be seen that I have urged you to stay! Do not admit that I have said a word to you about his illness. I rely on you, remember! And, above all, say no syllable to Paul."

She turned away, re-entered the saloon by the glass door, and ran swiftly and softly up the stairs, leaving Barletti in a condition of considerable perplexity.

He remained in the garden wandering up and down until the dinner-bell sounded. Then, as he was going into the house across the paved courtyard, a servant who had been sent to seek him, met him, and preceded him into the dining saloon. It was a vast vaulted hall, whose dreariness was on too great a scale to be much mitigated by such French upholstery as had been hastily employed to decorate it for Sir John Gale's use.

The table was as big as the deck of a small yacht. The wax lights abundantly set forth on a huge black walnut-wood sideboard, and on the tall marble mantel-piece, and on the table itself, seemed to glimmer with hopeless feebleness, as though they were conscious of their inability to illuminate the vague dimness of the space. There was a little island of light in the centre of the table-cloth, but it seemed only to enhance the surrounding gloom.

Veronica was already in the dining-hall when Barletti entered it. Paul, too, was there, officiating as butler at the sideboard.

Barletti bowed profoundly, and saluted Veronica as though he then saw her for the first time that evening.

"Good evening, prince," said she, with a careless, haughty bend of the head.

In her rich evening dress, and with her composed disdainful grace, she seemed a very different woman from her who had spoken to him in the loggia half an hour ago.

A cover was laid for Sir John in his ac-

customed place. Barletti observed it, and stood for a moment after Veronica was seated, as though waiting for some one. "And Gale?" he said, interrogatively.

"Oh, Sir John will not dine with us. He felt a little tired with the heat this afternoon. We shall find him after dinner in the salottino. Sit down, prince."

"You permit? I am not de trop?"

"No, no. I am glad of the sight of a human face. This hall is the gloomiest, dreariest place! I have never quite got over an idea that it is haunted, and I find myself sometimes making out mysterious shapes in the dark corners. One evening in the summer, when the windows were wide open, a great bat flew in, and almost brushed my face! Ugh!"

They ate their dinner under Paul's grave impassible eyes, and with Sir John's empty chair between them.

"Thy master is not really indisposed, friend, eh?" asked the prince of Paul, as the latter was serving him with wine.

"Sir John missed his usual siesta, and was tired. He is quite well now, Signor Principe."

"Ah, bravo! It has been a devil of a summer. And the heat seems as if it would never leave off any more."

The dinner seemed to be spun out to an intolerable length. Barletti had a very excellent appetite, and ate on steadily. Veronica ate but little; but she drank off three glasses of champagne, whereat Barletti, accustomed to the almost ascetic temperance of his own countrywomen in the matter of wine, marvelled considerably. He could not help observing, also, that she did appear to be really thoughtful and anxious, falling every now and then into fits of musing. And at this, attributing her careful brow to uneasiness regarding her husband, he marvelled still more!

When the dessert was put on the table, Paul prepared to withdraw. Veronica desired him to remain: speaking in English, of which language Barletti understood very little when he saw it, and almost nothing when he heard it.

"I must return to Sir John, miladi."

"Then tell Ansano to remain, and as soon as Sir John is in the salottino, let me know."

The other servants went away, leaving Ansano to hand round the dishes of fruit, which, in his zeal, and the elation of being left to his own devices free from Paul's supervision, he did with feverish energy; until Veronica put an end to his service

by desiring him to go and stand still at the sideboard.

The dining-hall, like all the suite of rooms on the west side of the house, had a door communicating with the loggia outside. Veronica bade Barletti finish his wine at his leisure, and rose from her chair saying that she would go and walk in the loggia until Sir John should be ready to receive them.

A request to be permitted to accompany her was on Barletti's lips, but she checked him by a look, and went out alone, pacing slowly and regularly up and down under the stone arcades. The night was dark, and since sunset the air had grown cool. Veronica lifted the gauze upper tunic of her dress, and wrapped her shoulders and arms in it. As she walked solitarily, a feeling of intense loneliness came upon her, such as she had never experienced in her life.

Outside in the darkness she looked in at the lighted hall each time she passed the glass door. She saw the brightness of the table, glittering with glass and silver, and adorned with flowers. She saw Barletti seated there. His face was towards the window. The light fell on his bald forehead and dark eyes, and mellowed the tint of his pale skin. He looked like a portrait by Vandyke. She regarded all this with an inexpressible sensation of *strangeness*. It seemed to her that she was looking on the room, and on the man, for the first time. It seemed to her that she had no part in anything within those walls. No one could see her out there in the darkness. And to look on even the most familiar face, being oneself unseen, gives it an unfamiliar aspect.

The fact of being shut out there alone in the darkness and of looking in upon the lighted rooms produced in her a sense of complete isolation: isolation of spirit as well as of body. What did her existence matter to any one? If she could at that moment transport herself to Shipley-in-the-Wold, and peep in at the vicarage windows, she would see no void that her absence had made. It would all be going on much as usual. Her father would be reading by the fire—they must have fires now in the evening—and Maud would be reading too, or perhaps playing softly on the old piano. Or, it might be that Mr. Plew was there, prosing on in his mild, monotonous voice. And outside, the wide flats would be looming dreary and vague; and near Sack's farm the sheep and the white cattle would glimmer dotted about the pastures fast asleep. She could fancy it all! So, thought

she, a ghost must feel revisiting unperceived the haunts of the body.

The idea of death thus conjured up, made her shiver, and nervously walk faster. How lonely she felt! How lonely, how lonely!

Veronica had never in her life comprehended what was meant by a "pleasing melancholy." Sadness of any kind was utterly distasteful to her; and aroused either a species of impatient resentment, or a headlong abandonment of herself to despair, which had some anger in it too.

All at once the windows of the salottino threw out rays of brightness into the night. Sir John must be there. The rays came through the interstices of the wooden venetian blinds. She could not look into the salottino as she could into the dining-hall, where the shutters were left open. She felt a sudden yearning for light, and shelter, and companionship. It was too intolerable being out there alone with her own thoughts in the darkness.

She went into the house through the dining-room where Barletti was still sitting at the table. He had drunk scarcely any wine since Veronica left him; but to kill the time he had eaten nearly the whole contents of a large glass dish of sweetmeats, and was beginning to find that occupation pall on him when she reappeared.

Ansano stood sentinel in the background. He had not found the half hour a pleasant one, either. If he might have been permitted to distinguish himself by handing to the signor principe every dish on the table in regular sequence, he would have been content. For Ansano, like the rest of the servants, was little more than a mere rustic, and the delighted pride he felt in such professional promotion as was implied in being trusted to do any service unwatched by Paul, wore still the gloss of novelty. But to stand there, at the sideboard, still and silent, while the other servants were supping socially together, was a severe trial.

Veronica walked at once through the dining-hall to the salottino, and Barletti followed her. Sir John was lying on a sofa. A lamp stood on a small table near his head, but it was so shaded as to throw no light on his face, although it illuminated the gay flowered dressing-gown he wore, and his white wrinkled hands.

"Here is Prince Cesare de' Barletti," said Veronica, seating herself on a low chair near the sofa. "He wanted to go away when he heard that you were not well. But I made him stay."

"Oh!" said Sir John, in a kind of grunt.

The greeting was so exceptionally un-courteous even for Sir John, that Barletti rose up as though he were moved by a spring over which his will had no control, and said, "I regret my intrusion. If I had supposed for a moment that monsieur le baron was seriously ill——"

"Who says so? I am *not* seriously ill!" snarled Sir John.

"Of course not!" interposed Veronica, quickly. "I said so. If Sir John had been seriously ill, it would be another matter. But his indisposition was of the very slightest, and it is now quite gone."

Either, she thought, he must confess to being so indisposed that the presence of a stranger irked him, or he must ask Barletti to remain. But Sir John did neither. Whichever one of several given courses of action was most pleasing to Sir John's state of temper at the moment, he habitually adopted. Such cobwebs as duty towards, or consideration for, others, were entirely powerless to restrain the passions or caprices of his monstrous egotism.

"Yes," he said, speaking, as he had spoken throughout, in a muffled strange voice, and articulating indistinctly: "I am quite well, but I don't feel energetic by any means. I shall not ask you to stay to-night, prince; it would only bore you."

It was almost impossible to resist this hint, but Barletti caught a glance from Veronica which so plainly begged him to remain, that he answered: "Now, my good Gale, I won't hear that. Bore me! Not at all; I shall stay and chat until your bed-time. Or, if you prefer it, we'll have our partie of picquet. Which shall it be?"

Sir John was surprised at this unwonted insistence. The man had had his dinner; why did he wish to stay? That he evidently did wish it, was however no inducement to his host to yield.

"Frankly, my dear friend," said Sir John, making an odd grimace, as though he had tried to smile and failed: "I will to-night have neither chat nor cards. I decline your company! That is the charm of having an intimate friend; I know you won't be angry if I beg you to leave me to myself, or," he added, slowly turning his eyes on Veronica, "to miladi. That is myself; it's quite the same thing."

But in looking at Veronica, he surprised a glance of intelligence passing from her eyes to Barletti. Sir John could not change the direction of his own gaze

quickly enough to catch the answering look on the prince's face: his facial muscles appeared not to be under full command; but he saw an expression of irresolution and conflict in Barletti's whole bearing.

The prince rose, and then seated himself again, and then again rose with more determination and advanced to the side of the sofa holding out his hand to Sir John, and saying: "Good-night, then, caro Gale. Angry? No, of course I shall not be angry!" Then he bowed low to "miladi," and said in a low tone and with intention, "I regret to be banished from our good Gale, miladi: but I am sure he will be quite himself to-morrow. You need not—none of us need be uneasy about him."

"Uneasy!" echoed Sir John. "Que diable, Barletti—who is likely to be uneasy?"

And as he spoke, he looked not at the prince but at Veronica.

"Who indeed?" said Veronica, returning Barletti's parting salutation with the stateliest of bows. She was reassured at heart. For she argued thus: "If Barletti thought there were anything serious the matter, he would not have been restrained by any fear of Sir John from giving me a hint of it by word or look."

And the first faint dawn of a project rose dimly in her mind—a project of attaching and binding this man to her, so as to secure his assistance and protection if—if anything should happen to Sir John. And already in the dawn of her project the prospect of that dread "something which might happen" showed a little less dreadful.

Meanwhile Sir John lay on the sofa watching her from under the shadow that covered his face, and thinking of the look he had surprised her giving Barletti. The look had put a new idea into his mind, a very unpleasant idea, not unpleasant merely because, if correct, it would argue some of the ideas he had hitherto entertained to have been wrong (though that contingency alone was disagreeable enough), but because, also, it would have the effect of making him uneasy in the future.

#### CHAPTER VII. WHAT THEY SAID AT THE CLUB.

PAUL had such a terrible time of it that night, in undressing Sir John and getting him to bed, that when he was alone in his own little room—within easy reach of his master's, and communicating with it by means of a large bell hanging at the head of his bed—he began to go over some calculations in his mind, with the half-formed intention of retiring from the baronet's



service with a thousand or so fewer francs than the sum he had determined on as the limit of his savings.

Sleep brought counsel to Paul, however, and he arose in the morning prepared to go through the term of service he had set himself. But whether sleep had brought counsel to Sir John or not, it is certain that he woke in a humour worse, if possible, than that in which he had gone to bed.

He did not feel so much recovered from the indisposition of yesterday as he had expected to feel. He was extremely feeble, except in temper; there, he was as vigorous and ferocious as a healthy tiger with a fine appetite and nothing to eat.

Paul attended on him silent and watchful.

At length he said, with grave deliberation: "You must have a physician, Sir John."

The reply was a volley of oaths, so fiercely uttered that they left the baronet panting and glaring breathlessly from his pillow.

"Excuse the liberty, Sir John," said Paul, with a shade more gravity, but otherwise quite unmoved, "but you must have a physician. You are a little feverish. It is nothing. A little draught will make you quite strong soon for your journey."

"A lit-tle draught," muttered Sir John, trying to mimic Paul's accent. "A little devil!"

"In this country fevers go quick. Excuse the liberty, Sir John. If you allow, I will go for a physician myself."

The man's steady persistence had some effect on his master. Sir John moved his head restlessly, and said, "Go? Where will you go? You don't know any of the doctors here, curse them!"

"There is a good and esteemed English physician, Sir John, lives in——"

"Damn the English physician! You infernal idiot, do you think I will have any of *them*, jabbering and boasting, and telling in the place that they have been attending Sir John Gale? Do you think I want a pack of British fools rushing up here to stare at me?"

"Bene, bene," said Paul. In his secret mind he had but a poor opinion of the English faculty, whose views, on the subject of bleeding especially, appeared to him to be terribly limited. "Benissimo! Better so, Sir John. I will fetch a most excellent medico. One who will cure you immediately—Dr. Maffei. He is well known, Sir John."

"Well known, you fool?"

"Well known among the Italians, Sir John," added Paul, astutely. "The signori Inglesi mostly employ their own physicians."

"Whatever he may say, I shall start for Naples on the nineteenth: remember that!"

In this way Sir John gave a tacit consent to the visit of the Italian doctor.

When that gentleman arrived at Villa Chiari he declared that there was no fever about Sir John. Paul had been mistaken there. But he let slip another ugly word, which Paul, who was present during the whole interview (acting as interpreter occasionally, for Sir John's Italian and the doctor's French sometimes came to a cul de sac, out of which Paul had to extricate them), smothered up as well as he could, in the hope that it might not reach Sir John's ears.

"I got a fall from my horse last year, and was badly hurt, and had a long illness in consequence," said Sir John, feeling that the phenomenon of so wealthy and important a personage as himself being reduced to a condition of great weakness needed some explanation: "I think it shook me more than they thought at the time. That's the only way I can account for being in such a devil of a state."

"Ah, yes. And then, you see, you are getting old, and you have probably been rather intemperate in your youth," answered Dr. Maffei, with disconcerting sincerity.

Sir John began to think he had been wrong in not having an English physician, if he must have any at all.

Dr. Maffei prescribed some medicine, and a plain, but nourishing diet.

"I am going to Naples on the nineteenth," said Sir John, brusquely.

"I do not know. I do not think I should advise your making a journey so soon."

"I shall not trouble you, sir, for your opinion on that point. I am going on that day. Good-morning."

The wild-beast temper had leaped out and shown its fangs so suddenly that the doctor's brown smooth-shaven face remained for a few seconds absolutely blank with amazement. Then he bowed silently; and, with a certain dignity, despite his short, stubby figure and ungraceful gait, walked out of the room.

An amazement of a livelier and more agreeable nature overspread his countenance when, driving down the hill in his fiacre, he inspected the bank-note which Paul had handed to him in an envelope. Its amount was more than ten times what

he would have considered a sufficient fee from any of his compatriots—it was, indeed, ostentatiously excessive. Sir John had some vaguely vindictive notion in his head that the beggarly Italian would repent not having been more civil to a man who could afford to pay such a fee. But he was wrong. The doctor was pondering upon the extraordinary and absurd constitution of an universe in which so anomalous a nation as the English was permitted to exist.

It would be difficult to decide whether or not the medicines sent by Dr. Maffei did the patient any good; but the fact was, that Sir John did not get worse, and was able to keep his resolution of going to Naples on the nineteenth of October.

Between the day of his tête-à-tête dinner with Veronica, and that date, Cesare de' Barletti had to undergo many buffetings of fortune. He was tossed backward and forward from sunshine to shade, by the selfish caprice of a little white hand—and these little white hands can strike hard sometimes. A man who has nothing to do from morning to night is glad of a habit which saves him the fatigue of deciding how he shall bestow himself at a given hour. He likes to say, "I *must* be with So-and-so this evening." It has a cheap air of duty. Thus mere habit had caused the Neapolitan princeling to be a regular visitor to the English baronet in the old days at Naples, when the latter was bound to his room by a fit of the gout.

The visits had been begun at the promptings of good-nature, combined with a natural taste for a superior cuisine. Sir John, at that time, employed a very accomplished cook.

Then in Florence it must be admitted that curiosity had been the chief spur which at first induced the prince to undergo the fatigue of sitting behind a cab-horse, and seeing him struggle up the steep road to Villa Chiari. He wanted to see the interior of the ménage, whose master and mistress seemed so ill-assorted. But very soon it began to appear to him a necessity of existence that he should pay his evening visit to the villa. He even found some satisfaction in his game of piquet. An Italian is usually amazingly patient of boredom: or, it may be, is unconscious of it, which is pleasanter for himself. Barletti admired Veronica extremely. And her presence was a strong attraction to him. By-and-bye it began to occur to him that it might be worth his while to pay his court to this beautiful woman, after a more serious fashion than he had at first

contemplated. Sir John was failing. He might die and leave a rich widow, who would become a prey to needy fortune-hunters: to fortune-hunters who would not have the same advantages to offer in exchange for wealth, as could be found in an alliance with Cesare dei Principi Barletti! It would be a pity to see her sacrificed to such men as he had seen and known engaged in the chase after a wife with money. He made no definite plan, but suffered himself to drift on lazily, with just so much intention as sufficed to modify his behaviour in many subtle, nameless ways. But after the incident of Sir John's indisposition, there arose a different feeling in his breast towards her.

Barletti really had a fund of kindness in him. He was becoming fond—with a fondness truer and more tender than that inspired by the fine contrast of diamonds on a satin skin—of this girl, so young, so beautiful, and so lonely! From the moment when she had appealed to him in some sort for advice and support, a fibre of manhood was stirred in him on her behalf. He would have even made some kind of active sacrifice for her. So, despite Sir John's irritability and insolence, Barletti continued to endure seeing his cab-horse toil up the hill overhanging the Ema, evening after evening.

And Sir John Gale did not scruple to make use of Barletti. He would give him little commissions to execute in the city, and expected him to read up the news of the day and retail the gossip of the hour for his amusement.

One afternoon, in search of this latter commodity, Barletti was standing at the door of the club with a knot of others.

"I remember him at Rome," said a portly man with dyed whiskers, continuing a desultory conversation with Barletti. "A red-haired man who hunted. Quite the type of an Englishman."

"That's a mistake you all make," observed a languid, spindle-legged young nobleman with a retreating chin. "I believe there are as many red-haired people in Italy as in England."

The spindle-legged young nobleman had married an English wife, and had been in England, and spoke with authority.

"No, no, it's the Irish that have red hair!" exclaimed a third. "Or the Scotch. I forget which."

"Zitto!" whispered the first portly speaker, as a tall old man appeared at the club door, "the captain won't hear you assert that the Irish have red hair!"

The captain was a half-pay officer who played an uncommonly good game at billiards. He was understood to live chiefly by his wits, but he had the entrée to several distinguished families who clung—theoretically, for a more practical clinging would have involved an amount of inconvenience which it would have been mere Quixotism to encounter—to the old régime; he was a zealous Roman Catholic, and, it is scarcely necessary to add, was descended from one of the ancient kings of Ireland!

"Who has red hair?" asked the captain, in Italian flavoured with a rich Kerry brogue.

"We were talking about a man I know here, un riccone, an immensely rich fellow," said Barletti.

"Indeed! Who is he?" said the captain, affably. He had no constitutional prejudice against rich fellows.

"Baron Gale."

"Baron *what*? I never heard the title."

"He is an English baron—Sir John Gale—I knew him in Naples."

"O, a baronet! Per Bacco!" exclaimed the captain, pronouncing the name of the heathen deity precisely like the last syllable of "tobacco," with a very sharp a. "It isn't Tallis Gale, is it?"

"No, no; John: Sir John Gale."

"Aye, aye, that is the baptismal name. But he took the name of Gale when he came into a fortune, being richer than enough already, that's always the way. He's a thin, high-shouldered man, with sandy hair and black eyes?"

"Già."

"And has a handsome wife?"

"Bellissima!"

"*That's* the man!" cried the captain, rolling the end of his cigar between his lips relishingly. "I knew him in Ireland in the year 'forty-nine. My lady is a great beauty—*was*, that is, for she must be quite *passée* by this time—and married him for his money."

"*Passée*!" echoed Barletti, on whom that word alone, of all that the captain had uttered, had made an impression. "Diamine! What do you call '*passée*'? She is as fresh as a Hebe, and young enough to be his daughter!"

"Pooh, pooh, my dear friend! There's some mistake. Lady Tallis Gale must be fifty if she's a day!"

The bystanders burst into a derisive laugh. Barletti had allowed himself to boast a little of his intimacy at Villa Chiari, and had exalted "*miladi's*" beauty to the skies. It is naturally agreeable to find that one's friend has been exaggerating the charms of a

society from which one is oneself excluded. Barletti had to undergo a great deal of banter: and many pleasantries were uttered on the humorous topic of Lady Gale's supposed age and infirmities: which pleasantries being (like some other things which are grateful to the truly genteel palate, as caviare and old Stilton) of a somewhat high flavour, we may be dispensed from laying before the reader.

Barletti fumed and protested and gesticulated, in vain. The joke at his expense was too good to be lost.

"That's why she never showed, then, in the Cascine or anywhere," said he of the spindle legs, reflectively. That young nobleman was not, strictly speaking, imaginative, and had taken little part in the shower of jests which had been flung at Barletti. "I *thought* it was queer, if she was so handsome as all that!"

The conception of a strikingly handsome young woman who did *not* want to show herself in the Cascine, was entirely beyond this young gentleman's powers of mind. He was as incredulous as an African to whom one should describe a snow-storm.

That evening Barletti, seated at the picquet-table opposite to Sir John Gale, caused the latter to dash his cards down with an oath, by asking him a simple question: "Have you been married twice, caro Gale?"

"What the devil's that to you, sir?" demanded the baronet when he had recovered breath enough to speak.

Barletti drew himself up a little. "Pardon, monsieur le baron," said he, "but I do not quite understand that mode of address."

At another moment he might have passed over the brutal rudeness of his host's words, but his amour propre was still smarting from the jeering he had received in the morning. He was therefore ready to resent a small offence from one from whom he had endured greater offences with equanimity. That was not just. But man often deals as blindly with his fellows as fortune deals with him: and it is the first comer who receives the good or evil he may chance to hold in his hand, quite irrespective of the claims of abstract justice.

Sir John was not in a mood to take any notice of Barletti's sudden access of dignity.

"What put that into your head, pray?" asked Sir John, fiercely.

"No matter, monsieur le baron; if I could have conjectured that the topic was a painful one, I should not have adverted to it. Let us say no more."

"Trash, sir! I insist upon knowing what you mean."

Barletti had resolved not to be bullied further, and had raised his head confronting Sir John with a proud air, when he caught a glimpse through the glass door, of a graceful figure with long sweeping skirts, passing slowly along the loggia. It was yet early. They had not dined. Although the card-table was illumined by a lamp, the daylight was not excluded, and the loggia with part of the garden were distinctly visible from the interior of the room. Veronica was pacing along with her head bent down in a pensive attitude. As she came opposite to the window, she raised her head for a moment and looked in.

Sir John had his back to the window; but Barletti could see her. She looked full at him, and he saw, or seemed to see, something plaintively appealing in her eyes. It all passed so quickly that there appeared to be scarcely any pause between Sir John's last words and Barletti's reply, uttered coldly, but not angrily.

"Insist," *caro Gale*, is an absurd word to use. But if you really wish it, I have no objection to tell you what made me ask if you had been twice married. It is no secret. Your name was mentioned at the club to-day, and a man declared that he had known *miladi* years ago, and that she was—was not quite young now. I thought it might have been a former wife of whom he spoke. He said, by-the-bye, that you had another name besides *Gale*—*Salli*—*Talli*—I forget it now."

Sir John laughed a little grating laugh. "Well," said he, taking up his cards again and arranging them in his hand: "I suppose you can judge for yourself about the correctness of your friend's information on one point at least. *Miladi* would be much obliged to him if she could know that he said she was 'not quite young.' Ha, ha! I suppose the fellow was trying to hoax you. By-the-bye, I would advise you, if you want to be in *miladi's* good books, not to tell her that you have been discussing her at the club. She's so devilish proud that she'd never forgive you. Allons, let us finish our game."

Barletti understood very well that he had got no answer to his question. But he was too glad to have avoided a quarrel with Sir John to care about that. And he was more glad than ever that he had commanded himself, when Veronica entered and sat a little behind Sir John's chair, talking little and smiling less, but gentle, amiable, and looking exquisitely beautiful.

All through dinner her unwonted softness of mood continued. She had lately,

as has been hinted, displayed a good deal of caprice and hauteur in her behaviour to Barletti: so that her mildness was made precious by contrast. It was the last evening he was to spend at Villa Chiari. On the following day Sir John had decided to start for Naples.

"Good-bye, prince," said Veronica, giving him her hand. It was the first time she had ever done so; and Barletti's heart beat suddenly faster, as he clasped her fingers for a moment in his own.

"We shall see you in the winter?" added Veronica.

"I hope I shall be able to get away. I came here, thinking I should stay perhaps a fortnight, on some business for Alberto" (Alberto was his elder brother, and the head of the family), "and these tiresome lawyers have kept me broiling in Florence throughout the whole summer. *Pazienza!* I do not regret my detention," he added, a little awkwardly, as he bowed once more to "*miladi*."

Then he went away through the garden, past the broken fountain, and out at the wide gates. There his *fiacre* was awaiting him. But he told the man to drive on slowly, and stay for him at the foot of the hill. And after standing for a few minutes gazing at the old house, white in the moonlight, black in the shadow, he absolutely walked more than three-quarters of a mile down the hill, under the autumn sky spangled with stars: walked through the thick, soft dust which speedily covered his well-varnished boots with a drab-coloured coating. And even when he reached the foot of the descent, he had not yet exhausted the excitement, which made it irksome for him to sit still in a carriage. He paid the coachman and dismissed him, and tramped home through the streets on foot.

All which might have proved to a discerning eye, that Cesare dei Principi Barletti was feeling powerful and unwonted emotion.

### AS THE CROW FLIES.

HARROGATE TO BERWICK. FINAL ROOST.

THE crow bears on from Whitby to Harrogate, in the last century the northern rival of Bath, and a depôt of gay invalids and the testy fathers of old comedy. This bare common, once part of Knarborough Forest, was in Elizabeth's time stripped of most of its timber by the iron smelters. The first chalybeate spring (the earliest, indeed, discovered in England), was analysed by Sir William Slingsby in 1596.



Even before the Restoration the Harrogate waters had become famous for curing sick people. The company began to gather there and lodging-houses sprang up, but it was not till 1687 that the first public-house, on the site of the present "Queen," was built. Smollet came to Harrogate; he was indeed fond of Yorkshire, and, as the crow would remind his readers, has fixed on Scarborough as the place where Humphrey Clinker dragged out by the ear his choleric master whom he fancied to be drowning. Smellfungus, as Sterne calls Smollet, who travelled "from Dan to Beer-sheba," and declared all to be barren, described the fashionable resort of Yorkshire as "a wild common, bare and bleak, without tree or shrub, or the slightest signs of cultivation." Worthy but testy Matthew Bramble (a type of Smollet himself), sketches the frugal and simple-hearted life then prevailing at the paradise of invalids. The company mostly lodged at four separate inns scattered over the bleak common, and went every morning to the well in their own carriages. From eight o'clock till eleven there was a table-d'hôte breakfast at each of the inns. The company drank tea in the afternoon, and played cards or danced in the evening. One custom Smollet much condemned. The ladies were obliged to treat the guests with tea alternately, and even girls of sixteen were not exempted from this shameful imposition. There was a public subscription ball every night at one or other of the inns, and the company from the other houses were admitted by tickets.

And now the crow darts forward to the northern frontier of Yorkshire, and singles out Rokeby—Scott's Rokeby—for his prey. Scott visited his friend Morritt there in 1809. Writing to Ellis, the poet expatiates on the beautiful scenery, especially at the junction of those swift and beautiful rivers, the Greta and the Tees, in a glen not unlike Roslin. "Rokeby is," he writes, "one of the most enviable places I have ever seen, as it unites the richness and luxuriance of English vegetation with the romantic variety of glen, torrent, and copse which dignify our northern scenery." The poem was written in 1812, during all the confusion of Scott's "flitting" from Ashestiel to Abbotsford. The descriptions are singularly faithful, and form an eternal guide-book to the place. The poet has sketched the Tees near Eggleston Abbey, where it flows over broad smooth beds of grey marble, and Mortham Tower, which is haunted by the ghost of a headless lady. The junction of

the Tees and Greta has been both drawn by Turner and described by Scott.

The scene of Bertram's interview with Guy Denzil is the glen called "Brignall Banks," below Scargill; the robbers' cave, hard by, is still shown, quarried in the flagstone, and Mr. Morritt tells us that he observed Scott noting with extreme care the plants (the throatwort, thyme, &c.) that grew round the spot. The woods and scaurs of Rokeby are the scene of the old mock-romance (fifteenth century) of "the Hunting of the Felon Sowe of Rokeby," by the blundering and not too-brave friars of Richmond:

She was more than other three  
The grisliest beast that ere might be—  
Her head was great and grey.  
She was bred in Rokeby Wood;  
There were few that thither goed  
That came alive away.

And now far into Northumberland the crow strikes, where from Brislée Tower he sees beyond the vale of Whittingham the blue cones of the Cheviots (twenty miles distant), and through their blue ravines glimpses of the Teviots. Then the crow swoops down on Alnwick, which stands square and defiant, like a thing of yesterday, on the gentle slope shelving to the Alne. Pure and smooth looks the moor-stone in its battlements, and yet the castle has stood the buffets of centuries, and has been battered by Scotch cannon and crimsoned with Scotch blood; rebel powder has often blackened it, and military engines have stormed at it. It was built by Eustace Fitzjohn, a friend of Henry the First, and an adherent of the Empress Maud, who surrendered his new-built fortress to the Scotch king to hold against Stephen. This same staunch partisan, Eustace, was eventually shot through by an arrow at the siege of Barnard Castle. Alnwick was through all the centuries a resting-place for kings. John came here, and angered the northern barons by his licentious insolence; and, in their turns, Edward the Third, Henry the Fourth, and Queen Margaret, and Edward the Fourth. Several of these monarchs, indeed, earned their lodging by first capturing the castle, which has a special Shakespearean interest from its connexion with the chivalrous Hotspur. A part of the castle between the tower, called "Hotspur's Chair," and that called the Record Tower, goes by the name of the Bloody Gap, from a breach through which the savage Scots once hotly entered, and were as hotly driven back. A mere record of the Earls of Northumberland is

an epitome of English history. The first lord of Alnwick was a knight of great prowess in Gascony and Scotland; his son Henry fought bravely at Halidon Hill and Slays, and captured King David of Scotland. The fourth Lord Marshal of England was a favourite of Wickliff, and, banished by Richard the Second, returned to die on Bromham Moor. Hotspur fell in Hatley Field, his father died in the battle of Taunton, and his son was slain at St. Albans. The fourth earl was murdered by a mob. The seventh earl aided the great rising in the north, and was executed. The eighth earl, the lover of Mary Queen of Scots, was beheaded in the Tower.

Some curious feudal customs still prevail under the shadow of the duke's castle. At the July fair, four men from different townships form a watch, and patrol from dusk till midnight. This service, exempting the townships from toll, preserves the remembrance of the annual Scottish inroad made at fair time in old days. On the evening of St. Mark's day freemen are admitted. The candidates, armed with swords, ride on horseback (it was quite necessary to go armed at Alnwick in the moss-trooper days), and at the market-place the cavalcade is joined by the chamberlains and duke's bailiffs. A band then heads the procession to the Freemen's Hill (four miles distant), where the candidates, dismounting, and putting on white dresses and white caps trimmed with ribbons, struggle ignominiously through a dirty, stagnant pool, twenty yards long. Holly-trees are then planted at the doors of the new freemen, as a signal for their friends to assemble and offer them congratulations at a bean feast.

From Alnwick the crow darts to Berwick, his last roosting-place, before he turns to his final roost on the old black dome that the golden gallery coronets so proudly. He alights on the old wall of Berwick (the town of the Bernicians), which has stood as much shot from both English and Scotch cannon as any town on the blood-stained Border. This town beside the debatable river was always being burnt or pillaged. When the Yorkshire barons went to Melrose and did fealty to King Alexander of Scotland (a boy of fifteen), as the Northumberland barons had done previously at Felton, King John, in rage and fury, stormed and burnt Berwick, setting fire with his own hand to the very house where he had lodged. He and his foreign mercenaries, Frenchmen and Brabançons, tortured many of the inhabi-

tants, hanging them up by their hands and feet till they groaningly disclosed where they had hidden their money. Then the Scots snatched it again till Edward the First, after coming here to discuss the claims of Bruce and Baliol, took it by storm some years after. The king on this occasion encamped on the declivity at the foot of the east end of Halidon Hill, in full view of the castle and town. His own quarters were fixed at the nunnery. His fleet venturing a rash attack, three ships ran aground and were burnt by the enemy. Edward, enraged at this, attacked the town, and, forcing the rude barricades of boards, took the place by the first coup de main. Thirty Flemish merchants held the Red Hill Tower till the evening, but were then destroyed by fire. Edward's soldiers, it is said, slew seven thousand Scotchmen in this attack, and, as Boethius says, the mills were turned with blood instead of water. The women and the garrison of two hundred men were sent back into Scotland, and Douglas remained a prisoner till the end of the war. King Edward stopped at Berwick fifteen days, and, to protect the place against the warlike Scotch, ordered a vast ditch, eighty feet broad and forty deep, to be dug through the neck of land between the sea and the Tweed. But the Scotch soon swarmed back again to Berwick; and when Wallace had slain the hated Cressingham, flayed him and cut his skin into stirrup-leathers, he took Berwick, the stone wall not being yet finished. But the English found it deserted on their advance. Robert Bruce next took it by escalade, being aided by a burgess of the town: Randolph and Douglas were the first to climb over the ramparts at a part near Cowgate.

A few years later brave Wallace was executed at Smithfield, and half his body sent to Berwick to be hung upon the bridge; while the wretched Countess of Buchan, who had crowned Robert Bruce at Seone, was shut up in a wooden cage, and hung like a blackbird outside one of Berwick Castle towers; after Edward had assembled here his Bannockburn army, Bruce, however, took the place again, which Edward the Second soon attacked in force. The English fastened boats full of men to the masts of their vessels, hoping to throw bridges on to the ramparts, but the assailants were driven off. They then tried a sow (a covered battering ram), but the Scotch split the roof with stones from their military engines, and with cranes let down burning timbers upon it and finally destroyed it.

When the English archers scuttled from the shattered sow, the Scotch cried, scoffingly, "The sow has littered." The siege was raised at the end of about fourteen days.

Edward Baliol eventually ceded Berwick to England in 1334; but in 1377, one of the most daring forays ever made into England led to the capture of the town by eight brave Scotch borderers, who killed the constable, Sir Robert Boynton, and only allowed his wife and family to depart, after exacting a ransom of two thousand marks sterling, to be paid within three weeks.

Eventually, besieged by the Earl of Northumberland, forty-eight Scotchmen held Berwick for eight days against seven thousand English archers, three thousand horse, two earls, and three lords. On the ninth day the place was taken, and all but the Scotch leader, the brave Sir John Gordon, were slain in the assault, in which Shakespeare's Hotspur displayed great courage. After Edward the Fourth took the place, however, it ever afterwards remained English, and on the accession of James the First the garrison was finally reduced.

From the highest stone of the Berwick Bell Tower, where blazing beacons have been so often lit to warn Northumberland that the blue bonnets were over the border, the crow now, with swiftest flaps of his sable wings, darts straight as an arrow back to his airy home on the great black dome that, rising gigantic above the wreathing smoke of London, resembles a huge witch's caldron seething with wizards' spells both of good and evil influence.

#### NATURE'S FIVE LESSONS.

##### LESSON I.

Two years to build a house? The mushroom's roof  
In one night rises,  
And surprises  
The shepherd lout ere crushed beneath his hoof.

##### LESSON II.

Ten years to work one room of tapestry?  
The rose's shoot  
Has grown a foot  
Since last night's rain. O Nature's majesty!

##### LESSON III.

Three years to fix on canvas a dead saint?  
Careless to-day,  
Thro' earth made way  
That snowdrop; dullard, learn from it to subtly paint.

##### LESSON IV.

Poor prodigal! you toss your gold in showers away?  
The Autumn tree,  
As recklessly,  
Flings all its leaves, but *they* return in May.

##### LESSON V.

Kind Nature keeps for all of us a gentle school.  
Even the wise,  
Through it may rise  
Still wiser. Sorrow and Death alone can teach the fool.

#### PRETENDERS.

THE world is full of pretenders. We are all pretenders, more or less. But it is not of such pretenders as these that I write—nor of real pretenders to thrones, which they or their ancestors have rightfully or wrongfully forfeited; but of the sham pretenders to great historical names, that in all ages, and in all countries, start up, whenever a great heritage is mysteriously vacant, or an ancient family has no accredited representative. Do these pretenders in any case believe in their own claims? Or are they all swindlers and adventurers? For instance, did all or any of the half dozen people, French, German, American, and English, who within the last sixty or seventy years have pretended to be Louis the Seventeenth, the poor child who perished in prison under the brutal treatment of the cobbler who had charge of him, really believe himself to be what he asserted? Were they all impostors—Augustus Meves in England, the Reverend Eleazar Wright in America, and all the rest of them—impostors knowing themselves to be such? Or did one or more act upon the honest conviction that he really was the person he represented himself to be? Did all the handsome young fellows in Highland garb, assuming to be lineal and legitimate descendants of King James the Second of England and Seventh of Scotland, believe in their royal pedigree; or did they play the part to get money out of it and gain consideration by it; or out of the love of hoaxing; or because in life they really knew no other part they could play so well? Without venturing to assert that not one of the many claimants to be the real Louis the Seventeenth, or the legitimate representative of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, may have been a true man, it may without want of kindly charity be admitted, that those among them who were not rogues must have been more or less fools: in other words crazy. Perhaps this is the simple explanation of the fact that so many of such characters have appeared. Madness often takes this form.

It happened that five or six years ago, I made the acquaintance of a re-

markable old gentleman, or rather, the remarkable old gentleman made my acquaintance, and confided to me the secret of his birth, parentage, education, and very modest pretensions. He was a very high personage, according to his story; but did not aim at high fortune, or at anything, in fact, except to be let alone. I was at the time temporarily resident in a great and populous city of the New World, which its inhabitants call Gotham, and which I shall call Gotham here. What took me to Gotham I need not tell. Suffice it to say that I was very well known in the city, and had the annoyance, perhaps if all the truth were known, it was the honour, of being often and very unjustly attacked in the columns of more than one of the Gothamite journals. In short I was for the time being the best abused Englishman in Gotham; and my name and business were familiar to thousands of people of whom I knew nothing, nor cared to know anything. It was a hot, a very hot, day in July, when there walked into my office, entirely unannounced, a venerable gentleman with long white hair, and a countenance so full of dignity and nobility of expression, that it would have excited attention anywhere. He was very careful to shut the door behind him, and seeing a young man in the room with me, he asked (looking very suspiciously around him) whether he could speak to me in private? It was a time when men's political passions were violently excited, and it especially behoved me to be on my guard, lest the Gothamite journals in their attacks on me with pen and ink, should inspire some lunatic, or some ruffian, with the happy idea of attacking me with a revolver. But this man was so old and so pleasant looking, that I had no other fear of him than that he had come to wheedle some dollars from my pocket. So I led him into my inner sanctum, and asked him to sit down, and tell me his name and business. He sat down, but not before making sure that the door was closed. I could not help gazing at him rather more earnestly than was quite consistent with good manners, by reason of his striking resemblance to the statue of Charles the Second in Edinburgh, which had long been familiar to my memory, and of the very picturesque character of his noble head and forehead. He was clad in a suit of home-spun blue; wore very thick-soled shoes, that did not appear to have been blackened for many a day; and had economically turned up the ends of his

trousers, to prevent their contact with the mud. He carried a serviceable blackthorn stick in his hard right hand: a hand that bore the undoubted marks of manual drudgery; he had a gold chain of antique fashion, hanging from the antique fob, now so seldom seen: and had altogether the air of a well-to-do farmer in a rough country, where people are accustomed to hard work, and are not particularly nice, either in dress or manners.

"My name," he said, "is of no consequence. My real name I do not care to call myself by—there's danger in it; but I am known to my neighbours as Mr. ——" (let us say Blank).

"Well, Mr. Blank, is there anything I can do for you?"

"Much," he replied; "but I must warn you, that to do me a service is to incur danger, very great danger; and you shall not incur it, until you know who I am. Shall I tell you? Or are you afraid?"

"You may tell me; and I am not afraid," I replied, beginning to feel additional interest in my mysterious visitor.

"I will go right into the matter at once," he said. "Look at me. I am the son of Charles Edward Stuart, who was lawful King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and was commonly and unjustly called the Pretender: a man who never pretended to be what he was not, or to the possession of anything but his own."

I certainly did start when Mr. Blank uttered these words; even if I did not rub my eyes to be quite certain that I was not asleep and dreaming. Being quite certain that I was awake, I looked incredulous, and replied:

"Surely, Mr. Blank, you cannot be the son of a man who died nearly eighty years ago?"

"Why not?" he inquired. "Besides, it is not nearly so long ago that my father died!"

"He died," I rejoined, "somewhere about the year 1788, being then, if my memory does not deceive me, about sixty-eight years of age. He was born, I think, in 1720?"

"He was," replied Mr. Blank; "you are quite right as to his birth: quite wrong as to his death. The truth is, he was the object of such persistent and cold-blooded persecution on the part of the British government, that a false story of his death was circulated in 1788; and he emigrated to the New World, in order to pass in peace the remainder (Mr. Blank, being an



American, said, 'the balance') of such days as it might please Heaven to allot to him. He settled in the rude and thinly-peopled region of Western New York, on the slope of the Adirondack Mountains, and purchased a farm which I now occupy. Shall I go on with my story?"

"By all means!"

"He was a hale and hearty man at that time, and remained hale and hearty for many years afterwards; so hale and hearty, that in the year 1798, being then turned seventy-eight, and having lived in America ten years, he married a young woman of Scottish extraction; not very young (she was two-and-thirty at the time), and very beautiful. That marriage was a happy one. Three children, of whom I am the sole survivor, were born to my father before he died. He kept his secret. Even his wife did not know who he was, except that his real name was Stuart."

"And how did you come to know it, Mr. Stuart?"—correcting myself, I said, "Mr. Blank?"

"By my father's will, bequeathing to me certain documents, in which I found all the proofs of the story I have told you."

"A very extraordinary story," said I.

"But not so extraordinary as true," added he, very sharply and peremptorily.

"Do the documents exist?"

"They do."

"Will you show them to me?"

"Upon conditions," said he, very slowly; "if your courage does not fail you when you know what the conditions are."

"Before we go farther," said I, "will you tell me for what reason you have chosen me to be your confidant?"

"Because I am persecuted by the British government, as my father was before me. Because I have no joy in my life. Because I am beset by spies. Because I go in danger of poison, or a shot from a revolver. Because I think that you have the means of causing all this persecution to cease."

"I? Really, Mr. Stuart, you overrate my importance. Supposing this persecution to be real, and not imaginary, I have no more power to help you than the man in the moon has. You say you have documents to prove your case. If so, I can only express my firm belief that if your documents be genuine, you have only to bring them under the notice of the British government, and that government, if persuaded that you are what you represent yourself to be, and as your documents, you say, will prove, will not only cease to

persecute you—if ever they did persecute you—but, in consideration of your being the heir and representative of Charles Edward Stuart, will settle on you a very handsome pension."

The old gentleman shook his head. "I don't want a pension; I have a farm of my own, and am quite independent of any man's favour, or the favour of any government. I want nothing but to be let alone. Let me drink and eat without fear of poison. Let me turn a corner without risk of a pistol or a bludgeon. Let me sink down into the common herd of common men, and be at peace. That is all I ask. I want no pension, no money, no recognition, no anything from anybody. Peace, and peace alone. That is all. And to you, sir," he added, suddenly, "I owe an apology for having intruded upon you. It will be known in a week to the court and government of Queen Victoria that you have received and spoken to me. You will be a marked man, sir, depend upon it, unless you go forthwith and denounce me. You may denounce me if you like. I give you full and free permission."

"That would be gross treachery, Mr. Stuart," replied I, "and I shall not denounce you. But if you have in your possession the documents you speak of, I should be glad to see them."

"You shall see them this day week," he said, "and without fail. Mind, I want nothing but to prove to you that I am what I say I am; and that when convinced of the fact, you will exercise your influence with the British government to have me left in peace. You are about to say that you have no influence? I have my own opinions on that subject. You can say for me what I cannot say for myself:—that I am no traitor, no intriguer, nothing but a poor, forlorn, last remnant of a once royal and powerful race, who asks nothing but a grave; and a quiet journey towards it."

Mr. Blank, true to his appointment, brought me the documents on the day he had fixed. The principal one was a certificate of marriage—it appeared to me duly signed and in all respects authentic—between Mr. Charles Edward Stuart of the state of New York, and a certain lady of the same state, dated in October, 1798. Next to this was the certificate of baptism of Charles Edward Stuart, dated November, 1799; a third document purported to be a licence from the state of New York, to Mr. Stuart, granting him, on payment of certain fees, the permission to be thenceforward known as Mr.

Blank. There was nothing further of any consequence.

I suppose I looked dissatisfied. At all events, I said to Mr. Stuart, that I had no doubt his father was married at the time specified, and that his name was Charles Edward Stuart.

"Well?" he inquired, somewhat triumphantly.

"Well," I replied, not at all triumphantly, "but what of that? I myself have known two people named Charles Edward Stuart, and neither of them claimed descent from the royal family on that account."

"Of course not," said Mr. Blank, "they would have been impostors if they had, because they would have usurped a position that belongs to me only. There may be a thousand Charles Edward Stuarts in the world, for that matter; but there is only one of them the descendant of kings, and that is the man who stands before you."

"But Mr. Stuart, or Mr. Blank," I replied, "there is one link wanting in your golden chain, and that is a very important one. The link which proves your father to be the son of James the Second, so called; the man who fought and lost the battle of Culloden."

"Incredulous as St. Thomas!" he exclaimed; and then folding up his papers suddenly, and putting them carefully into an old and well-worn pocket-book, he added: "I have lost my time, and you have lost yours! I beg pardon for having intruded myself upon you. You are well quit of me. Had you believed my claim, and had you taken any steps in my behalf with the usurping government of the descendants of the 'wee, wee German lairdie' that came from Hanover to sit in the seat of better men than himself, you might have been a ruined, and you certainly would have been a marked, man. You have had a narrow escape. Good-morning!"

He was gone before I could say a word to detain him. When I went to the door to make an effort to bring him back and put him in a better humour, I heard his heavy step on the stairs, and the clump of his thick cudgel as he descended. I never saw or heard of him more.

I have often wondered what put the notion into this old gentleman's head: whether he were crazed on that score, and on no other: and whether his undoubted resemblance to the published portraits of Charles the Second, and the remarkable profile on the crown pieces of that reign, added to the strange coincidence afforded by his name, first gave him the idea, which

was to colour the whole course of his life, and infuse the little drop of poisonous gall into a cup of experience, that might otherwise have been sweet. I think he believed his own story. And it is just possible that as much may be said for a great many other pretenders of past and present times, who have gone through life burdened with a heavy delusion, and meaning no harm.

### SMOKING IN FRANCE.

It was Sir Walter Raleigh who first introduced tobacco into England; it was Jean Nicot, ambassador of Charles the Ninth at the court of Lisbon, who conferred the like benefit upon France.

What would have been the feelings of the Cardinal of Lorraine, at that time Prime Minister, had this same Nicot appeared with the wondrous plant in his hand, and spoken to his Eminence as follows:

"My lord, the finances of this realm are no doubt, as usual, in a right meagre condition. I have come to propose to your Eminence the creation of a new tax, which, without any sort of oppression, without arousing the least complaint, will in due time pour into the king's coffers something like a hundred and fifty million francs a year. The tax will be quite voluntary; no one will be compelled to pay it, and yet nine men out of ten at least will contribute to it cheerfully."

"Let us hear your proposal."

"Here it is, my lord. I would suggest that the Crown should reserve to itself the exclusive privilege of selling a certain herb which his Majesty's subjects might reduce to powder and stuff into their nostrils. Those who preferred it might cut up the plant into leaves and chew it, or better still, burn it and inhale the smoke."

If the prelate had listened thus far, it is probable he would have exclaimed:

"Your herb is then a perfume more fragrant than amber, than rose, or than musk?"

"On the contrary, your Eminence," would have answered Nicot, "it smells rather ill."

"And how many idiots and imbeciles do you conceive there will be, then, to poke this bad-smelling herb up their noses?"

"There will be, some day, more than twenty millions in this realm alone, my lord."

If there be not yet in France quite so many as twenty million men who smoke or take snuff, the number does not fall far short of it. The imperial manufactories sold, within the year 1867, no less than two hundred and forty-eight million six hundred and fifty-two thousand francs' (nine million fifty-three thousand nine hundred and twenty pounds) worth of tobacco under various forms. And the net profit which accrued to the revenue from this colossal sale was one hundred and seventy-seven million seven hundred and fifty-two thousand four hundred and thirty-five francs—that is, seven million one hundred and ten thousand and ninety-seven pounds, eight shillings.

In these days, every man who has not a few thousand acres of his own is more or less an advocate of free trade, and, consequently, ninety-nine men out of a hundred are strongly opposed to monopolies. Still, without being a renegade to the just principles of commercial freedom, one may be allowed to profess that there is no rule, however good, but should be suffered to have exceptions. Postal monopoly and telegraph monopoly are admitted to be necessities. A government monopoly of tobacco, if not defensible on the same ground as postal and telegraph monopoly, has, nevertheless, led in France to the good result that France is the only country in the world where, for a moderate price, an ordinary man can be sure of a pipe of good tobacco or an unadulterated cigar.

Tobacco, like every other human institution, has its detractors; and a French statistician of more ingeniousness than good sense has endeavoured to prove by the help of figures that the increase in the number of lunatics in France keeps exact pace with the increase in the number of smokers. "In 1838," he says, "the profit made by the State upon the sale of tobacco was thirty millions of francs, and there were ten thousand madmen in the land; in 1842 the profits had risen to eighty millions of francs, and the number of madmen to fifteen thousand; ten years later, we find one hundred and twenty millions of profit and twenty-two thousand madmen; while in 1862 there were no less than forty-four thousand madmen, to set off against a profit of one hundred and eighty millions of francs.

A few words will refute this mode of drawing conclusions. From the forty-four thousand insane must be deducted the women, who form forty-seven per cent (almost half) of the total; moreover, within the last thirty years the hideous plague of drunkenness, from which the French had formerly been almost exempt, has made rapid strides in France. The excitable people of the South, living in an ardent climate, quite unfit for the abuse of spirituous liquors, have of late years discarded the light red wines of Bordeaux and Burgundy, and taken to brandy, gin, beer, and, worst of all, to absinthe. Here lies the real secret of the rise in the number of madmen. Four-fifths of the lunatics of France are natives of Gascony, Languedoc, Auvergne, the Dauphiné, and Guienne; of the rest, those whose lunacy is not congenital have almost all gone mad under the distracting effects of the whirlwind life of gambling, drinking, and enervating debauchery, of which Paris has become the hot-bed.

It is useless to dwell upon the other argument of anti-tobaccoists, that there is enough nicotine in every pure cigar to kill a man outright. By the same process of reasoning we might say that in half a pound of almonds there is sufficient prussic acid to destroy a troop of soldiers; and that with the saffron that could be extracted from six bath buns, a whole nursery full of children might be sent to their graves. It is one thing to swallow the dis-

tilled quintessence of a substance containing a small quantity of poison; and it is another to take that poison mixed up with certain matters which counteract its effects and absorb its noxious properties. The moderate use of good tobacco involves no danger. On the contrary, in cases of nervous excitement, it is excellent as a sedative; it is excellent, also, as a remedy for sleeplessness; and its soothing qualities render it an invaluable solace for men who, like authors and painters, live in a state of constant mental excitement.

The Sultan, Amurath the Fourth, who condemned snuff-takers to death; the Shah of Persia, Abbas, who cut off their noses; Innocent the Eighth, who doomed them to hell-fire; and James the First, who wrote an absurd book against them; were all equally in the wrong. The remarks that apply to smokers apply to those who take snuff. Our grandfathers took snuff every day of their lives from twenty to ninety, without being the worse for it. All the great men of the last century indulged in this harmless—though, it must be owned, dirty—habit. Napoleon the First, not to have the trouble of opening a snuff-box every five minutes, used, when out campaigning, to keep both waistcoat pockets continually filled with a pet mixture of his own. To those who still maintain, in the face of such facts, that tobacco is hurtful, we have only to answer, as Voltaire answered, when after taking coffee all his life, he was told at seventy that the beverage was a poison: "Perhaps," he said; "but in that case a very slow one."

But the *sine qua non* condition in the use of tobacco is that the tobacco must be good; here we come back to the point whence we started—the immense benefit the French enjoy in smoking no worse tobacco than such as is prepared in the government manufactories under special supervision, and is offered for sale with the State mark.

It was in the year 1811, under the reign of Napoleon, that the French government first took the monopoly of tobacco. Previous to that date, the French smokers possessing but moderate means had fared as ill as those of England and the United States do to this day. But one night, at a ball at the Tuileries, the Emperor noticed a lady who was covered with diamonds. He asked his chamberlain who she was. On being told that her husband was a tobacco merchant who had made a colossal fortune within a few years, he at once suspected that a fortune built up so rapidly could have no very honest foundation. Ten months afterwards he signed, in his usual arbitrary way, a decree which secured to the State the exclusive right of fabricating and selling tobacco. The monopoly has been renewed since, every ten years, by successive legislative bodies. The present monopoly does not expire until the 1st of January, 1873, before which time, however, it will doubtless be renewed. From the 1st of July, 1811, to the 31st of December, 1867, the gross receipts of the "Régie," or Government Tobacco Establishment, were nearly two hundred and fifty-six million pounds English; the

expenses were about eighty million; the net profits about one hundred and eighty million.

The Government has every interest to see that what it sells should be of good quality, in order, firstly, that the demand for the thing sold should be general; and, secondly, that there should arise no suspicion of trickery or adulteration in the public mind. To this end, the supervision exercised over the tobacco manufacture is exceedingly strict. A director-general, responsible to the minister of finance, is placed at the head of the administration, and all the inferior posts of superintendence are filled by officers selected from the *Ecole Polytechnique*: which means that they are men of honour and unquestionable capacity.

The number of the imperial manufactories is seventeen. Five hundred and twenty-four officers are entrusted with the management of the plantations, and the surveillance of the manufactories. There are thirty-one store-houses; three hundred and fifty-seven wholesale warehouses; and thirty-eight thousand eight hundred and thirty-one retail establishments.

The tobaccoist in France is an official. The post is in the direct gift of the government, and is tenable only during good behaviour. He or she (for a great many of the holders are women) generally owes the appointment to the recommendation of the receiver-general of the district: the applicant is obliged to go through the form of drawing up a petition, which is submitted to the minister of finance, and signed by him on ratification. It is needless to say that the number of candidates to fill each vacant place is very large. Owing to the limited number of tobaccoists' shops, the business is very lucrative. The net profits of some of the shops on the boulevards, range from twenty-five thousand francs to sixty thousand francs a year. The famous *Civette*, opposite the *Palais Royal*, is said to yield one hundred and twenty-five thousand francs (five thousand pounds) a-year, but in the case of these well-situated establishments, it is not unusual for the business to be let and sub-let half a dozen times, the titular owner being often a person of high position: the widow of a general officer, who has died poor: or often an old retired officer himself, who has rendered *secret services*, and must be recompensed otherwise than by promotion or the *Legion of Honour*.

Every year introduces some new improvement into the system of preparation. Some scores of scientific men are continually employed—they are paid to do it and to do nothing else—in studying new methods of ameliorating the culture of tobacco, improving the flavour of the leaves, and so blending the different varieties as to form finer, and more wholesome cigars. But it is in the making of snuff that the French have attained rare perfection. The time required to turn a leaf of tobacco into snuff, according to the method of the "*Régie*," is four years and two months—a fact which speaks volumes for the care and pains bestowed upon the fabrication.

The "*Régie*" sells three kinds of tobacco for pipe-smokers. The best goes by the name of "*Maryland*." It is retailed in yellow packets, and costs five shillings a pound English money. The second quality has been baptised "*Caporal*." It is that most used, and costs four shillings the pound. The third quality is prepared for the use of soldiers solely; it costs but half the piece of *Caporal*; but it can only be obtained on presentation of a species of government voucher, to one of which the soldier is entitled every ten days. Tobaccoists are forbidden under heavy penalties to sell this tobacco to civilians.

The "*Régie*" manufactures six or seven kinds of cigars. The best cost from fifty centimes to a franc each. The large majority of Frenchmen know but five kinds of cigars: the *Londres*, *Trabucos*, *Millares*, *Decimos*, and *Sontellas*. Of these five kinds, the *Londres* is best; it costs twenty-five centimes (twopence halfpenny), and, if carefully selected, is fully equal to the *Regalias* which cost sixpence in London. The *Trabucos* cost twenty centimes, the *Millares* fifteen centimes, the *Decimos* ten centimes. They are none of them bad, and are all far superior to anything that can be had elsewhere for the money.

The two principal manufactories are in Paris: at the *Gros-Cailion*, where snuff and pipe-tobacco are made; and at *Reuilly*, where the higher class of cigars are manufactured. The task is entrusted in the latter establishment entirely to women: of whom there are as many as two hundred and fifty employed. A skilful workwoman can make from ninety to one hundred and fifty *Londres* in ten hours, and three hundred *Sontellas* within the same time. Not the least curious circumstance which strikes a visitor at the manufactory of *Reuilly* is the total silence observed by the two hundred and fifty workers. A whisper is punished by a fine, and work is paid for "by the piece."

Of course the tobacco monopoly enjoyed by the French government has often been made the subject of attack; and reformers are not wanting on the other side of the Channel who would abolish the privilege and open the market. Still, as these innovators are fain to own that the tobacco sold by the *Régie* is excellent, and that they could not hope to get better anywhere else for the same price, it is probable that these clamours will avail but little, and will, metaphorically and literally, end in—smoke.

## THE LEGEND OF DUNBLANE.

### IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

I SLEPT soundly during the first part of the night. But about three o'clock I woke suddenly—I might almost say, I started from my sleep. I had not been dreaming; I was not conscious of having heard any noise; but my sleep, somehow or other, was broken suddenly, and I sat up in my bed with a sense of undefined alarm. I listened:



all was still: the southing of the wind among the Scotch firs below the rampart-wall was the only thing I heard. But, feeling restless, I jumped out of bed, went to the window and opened it. There was no moon, but it was a light night. I could distinguish the ivy on the wall beneath; the little door in the angle of the turret opposite, and the dusky forms of the owls that flew past the window. Almost immediately beneath it was a curious old well said to be of wonderful depth, but long since unused. If one dropped a stone in there an interval which seemed like half a minute elapsed before a faint splash told that it had reached the bottom.

I had been at the window a few minutes when the door in the turret opposite opened, with a slight grating sound which attracted my attention. A figure glided forth, and ran swiftly towards the well. I distinguished that it was a woman by the long drapery, and as she came under the window I could just make out that she carried some sort of vessel in her hand. Whatever it was she threw it in, and waited, leaning over the side, until she caught the distant thud of the object as it met the water. Then she returned rather more leisurely than she had come, the door was shut, and, though I waited at the window a full hour, I saw and heard no more.

I do not know that at any other place, at any other time, this circumstance would have aroused my curiosity. As it was, I could not get to sleep again for thinking of it, and speculating what could have been the motive that induced any female of the establishment to rise in the dead of night in order to cast something into the well.

I had to be stirring very early, and I was at my solitary breakfast when Lord Dunblane entered. He looked ghastly, so much so, that I could not help asking if he was ill. He turned fiercely round upon me, demanding why I asked.

"Because you look as if you had not slept," I said.

"And you? Pray how did *you* sleep?" he inquired, knitting his brows. "You were not disturbed? You had no nightmare after Lady Dunblane's conversation last night?"

I had resolved to say nothing of what I had seen, and replied that I had rested pretty well. I was then proceeding to express my thanks to him for his hospitality, when he interrupted me. "If you wish to show yourself a friend, say as little as possible about your visit here to any one. I am

going abroad at once. I have made up my mind that Lady Dunblane can live here no longer. You have heard enough to know how she hates the place—and it disagrees with her, moreover. She has had several epileptic attacks—a severe one this very night; it is evident that the climate does not suit her, and I am recommended to take her to Italy. My lady and I can never agree here. She does all she can to goad me to madness—and perhaps she has succeeded: who can say? People will gossip, Carthews, when we are gone. Prove yourself a friend, and say nothing about our quarrels while you have been here."

I was a good deal surprised at the tenor of this speech, but thought it reasonable upon the whole. There was something in his eye, nevertheless, which disquieted me. Coupling it with Pilson's words, two days previously, and with my own observations, I could not avoid the conviction that the fate to which he himself had just now alluded was imminent. It might be warded off, perhaps, by change of scene, and the removal of the causes of irritation; but it was impossible to look at him steadily, and to doubt that incipient insanity was there. I begged him to act upon his determination of going abroad without loss of time; and then, shaking his hand, I stepped into the chaise, and drove off.

Well, I returned to Aberdeen; and some days after this Pilson called on me. I asked what news he brought of Lord and Lady Dunblane.

"They are gone abroad. I suppose it is the best thing he could do. Her ladyship had a succession of such severe fits that she was unable to leave her room, or to see any one but her maid after you left. I *did* see her once at the window, and her look quite alarmed me. His lordship was much calmer, but he scarcely spoke. His wife's sudden prostration, after all their violent bickerings, affected him a good deal. He is in a bad way, I think, Carthews. I mean that I am very much afraid"—and he pointed significantly to his head.

I told him that I fully shared his apprehensions, and then asked him more particularly to describe the change in Lady Dunblane's appearance.

"The morning I left I was walking round the rampart when I heard one of the windows rattle. I looked up, and there was Lady Dunblane, her head pressed against the panes, and with such a terrible expression of agony in her face as I shall never forget. She kept opening her

mouth, and making the most hideous grimaces at me, so that it was clear that she was not quite in her right senses at the moment. She disappeared suddenly."

"Did you ever see any indication of a tendency to such a malady in her ladyship?" I asked.

"No. I cannot say I ever did," he replied.

"Was no doctor sent for?"

"Yes, the country apothecary came once."

"And what did he say? Did you speak to him?"

"Yes. I saw him in the hall as he was stepping into his buggy. I asked how he found her ladyship. He said she was much prostrated by the violence of the attack, but he seemed a puzzle-headed fellow. No doubt he was awed by the honour of being sent for to the castle; for I could not get much out of him. He seemed dazed; but muttered something about change being good for her ladyship."

"And who attended her during these attacks?" I inquired.

"No one but his lordship and the maid Elspie. My lord told me that his wife was very violent; but he would not suffer any of the men to be sent for, to hold her. He and Elspie, who is a very powerful woman, managed her between them. He said that he had found it necessary to tie her hands. I do not envy him his journey. They left in the family coach an hour after our departure, and were to travel night and day to Leith, where they took ship for Holland."

He then went on to say that the young heir-at-law had returned to London much depressed with his visit, and that the necessary formalities having now been gone through (which I understand to mean that the secret of the haunted room had been duly communicated to him), Mr. Dunblane would in all probability never see the castle again during my lord's lifetime.

I seldom saw Pilson for some time after this conversation; when I did, he told me what little he knew of the Dunblanes; but months often elapsed without his having any direct communication with my lord, and even then the letters he received were mere bald statements and inquiries, exclusively upon matters of business. These, however, were sufficient to show that his mind had not given way; they were lucid and perspicuous in every detail. There was never any mention of her ladyship, for

the obvious reason, as it transpired after a while, that she and my lord were separated. He was travelling now in Italy, now in Hungary, now in the East, while she remained—no one knew exactly where—in Switzerland. At the end of the third year he returned to Dunblane, and shut himself up there, refusing to see any of the neighbours who called. In reply to every inquiry for her ladyship (more especially those which a distant cousin, her only relation, made about this time), he stated that her ladyship's health obliged her to remain on the Continent; her mind had been much weakened by continued epileptic attacks, and she was unequal to correspondence. He stated, further, that she was under excellent medical care, and that though, by reason of the excitement under which she sometimes laboured, it was not deemed advisable that he should visit her often, he made a point of doing so once a year. This statement seems to have been considered satisfactory. Lady Dunblane's friends—and she had very few—were not suspicious, and the world at large troubled itself but little with the domestic concerns of a couple who had lived in isolated grandeur, with rare exceptions, since his lordship's accession to the title. Pilson went twice to the castle, during that year, and, as far as I know, he was the only guest. He gave a gloomy picture of the solitary man shut up in that big place. We both avoided all mention of her ladyship's name; but I now know that he was no easier than I was on that head.

It was towards the close of 1808 that he called on me one morning, at an unusually early hour. His face, his whole manner, betokened that my grave, quiet friend was unusually perturbed. He looked round the room—this very room where we are sitting—drew his chair close to mine, and said in a whisper:

"Carthews, I have come to you in a very distressing emergency. I hardly know whether I am justified in taking this step, but I do know that I can depend on you, and you may materially help me in a most painful and difficult situation."

Without more ado, he then proceeded to say that a young Frenchman, who gave his name as Jean Marcel, had called upon him the previous night, stating that he had lately come from Geneva, where he was in a wine merchant's office, and had been sent on business to Aberdeen. He was the bearer of a small crumpled note, addressed in nearly illegible characters, to M. Pilson,

Attorney, Aberdeen. He stated that he had come by it thus. Shortly before leaving Geneva, it had been his duty to inspect the "recolte" of various vineyards: among them one belonging to the Château d'Ozman some miles distant. The house itself was tenanted by an English lady, who was said to be mad or imbecile. At all events she was never heard to speak, and was closely watched by her attendants night and day. She walked on a terrace overlooking the vineyard, but it was never out of sight of a gaunt woman, who was, no doubt, her keeper. The intendant of the estate, who told Jean Marcel these particulars, walked through the vineyard with him, when they saw the unhappy lady on the terrace above. Her appearance had much interested Marcel. He described her as a handsome woman, but with a fixed, woe-begone expression of face, and wearing a black cloak, which entirely concealed her person. In the course of Marcel's inspection, they stood for some time just under the terrace wall, and he spoke to the intendant of his approaching voyage to Aberdeen. There was no doubt but that he was overheard by the lady on the terrace. She disappeared, but a quarter of an hour later, while they were still near the wall, the two men heard the sound of a running footstep upon the terrace, followed by a plaintive moaning, like that of a wounded bird. They looked up, and there she stood, glancing round with an expression of terror to see if she was followed, and of earnest supplication towards the two men beneath. She opened her mouth wide—a clear proof, the intendant seemed to think, of the poor creature's imbecility—then raised both arms up high, when, to his horror, he perceived that she had lost her right hand. With her left, she then suddenly dropped over the wall a paper with a stone inside, and had scarcely done this, when her gaunt attendant appeared upon the terrace. The poor lady's whole demeanour changed; the old fixed look returned, and she began once more, with slow uncertain steps, to pace the terrace. To gratify her, Marcel picked up the paper, and pocketed it, as he walked away. As soon as he was out of sight he examined it.

Outside was scrawled, "Pour l'amour de Dieu remettez cette lettre à son adresse." Within was the note addressed to Pilson. The intendant laughed at the affair, and tried to persuade Marcel to tear up the note. "All mad people imagine themselves to be sane, and this one no doubt wants to persuade her friends that she is unjustly

confined; but you need only look at her to see that she is a lunatic."

Marcel admitted the probability of this, but he could not bring himself to destroy the paper. Whether she was mad or not, the condition of this maimed unhappy creature had aroused his compassion so deeply, that he declared the first thing he would do on arriving at Aberdeen would be to find out the person to whom this note was addressed. And he had done so.

When he had finished this strange narrative, Pilson laid before me a scrap of paper—evidently the blank page torn out of the end of a book—on which was scrawled:

*"Help! for God's sake, help! before they kill me. Oh, save me, Mr. Pilson, save me, as you hope to be saved hereafter. E. DUNBLANE."*

We looked at each other for some minutes without speaking. At last Pilson said:

"If I consulted my own interest, I should remain silent, or simply enclose these lines to his lordship. Her ladyship's condition, no doubt, justifies any steps that have been taken. I cannot suspect my lord; and if he discovers that I have interfered in his domestic concerns, he will certainly take the management of his affairs out of my hands. But, on the other hand, does not humanity call for some investigation into this? I could not die at peace, remembering that I had turned a deaf ear to such a cry; but I am puzzled what to do, Mr. Carthews. It has occurred to me that you may have business connexions with Geneva, and might, perhaps, make inquiries which would not compromise you as they would me."

In other words, Pilson was anxious to ease his conscience at as little risk to himself as might be. I did not blame him; my interest was too deeply stirred for me not to follow up the inquiry with the keenest avidity. But then, as Pilson had hinted, it is true that I had nothing to lose. I promised him that I would write that very day to a correspondent at Geneva, and desire him to leave no stone unturned towards discovering the truth.

I had to wait some weeks for the answer. The commission was one the execution of which was beset with difficulties. The village pasteur, the doctor, the intendant of the vineyards, and all the neighbours were applied to, but little additional information could be gathered. At last the maire of the district was induced to investigate the case, upon representations being made to

him that there existed suspicions as to the treatment which the incarcerated lady—whether insane or only imbecile—met with. After a vigorous resistance they forced an entry into the château. The sight that met them was heart-rending. The poor creature lay dying upon her bed, and but for this intervention would have been denied the last consolations of religion. When the pasteur knelt down, however, and questioned her, she only shook her head and moaned. Then, with an effort, she opened her mouth wide, and, to their horror, they perceived that *she had no tongue*.

They implored her to write down the name of the perpetrator of this barbarous crime. But either she had no strength, or else she was praying, poor soul, for grace to forgive her persecutors, rather than for retribution. She listened devoutly to the good pasteur's prayers, and a glorious smile lighted up her tear-worn eyes as the death-film gathered over them. So the unhappy lady passed away. The woman Elspie was, of course, seized, and subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. She declared that the lady who was just dead had been thus mutilated by her husband one night when goaded into a state of insane rage by his wife's discovery of a secret, to which he attached a superstitious importance, and which she threatened to proclaim to all the world. In the struggle to defend herself, her right wrist was also severed. The woman maintained that her mistress had ever since been subject to violent fits of delirium, necessitating restraint. This I do not believe; there is no proof of it whatever. How far the rest of her story was true, it was impossible to say, and will never now be known. There were probabilities in favour of it; but, on the other hand, might not this wretch herself have been the instrument? I did not forget that I had seen her (as I have now no sort of doubt) on that fatal night stealing out to throw *something* into the well. Of her complicity, at all events, there was ample proof, since from the first she was the attendant upon her ill-fated mistress. But the hand of justice, for all that, was stayed.

The very same day that I received the letter containing the foregoing particulars, and while Pilson and I were deliberating what steps must now be taken, the news of an appalling catastrophe, which had

happened thirty-six hours previously, reached us. Lord Dunblane had been burnt in his bed, and the greater part of the castle destroyed. How the fire originated was never known, but it broke out from his lordship's room in the dead of night, and three sides of the quadrangle were burnt to the ground before the flames could be got under. The lovers of coincidences tried afterwards to make out that Lord Dunblane and his wife died the same night; the superstitious even fabricated a theory that, struck with remorse, upon learning, by second sight, of his wife's death, he had himself fired the castle, and resolutely perished in the flames. But all this is purely imaginary. It is sufficiently remarkable that these deaths should have been so near one another; but Lady Dunblane died at least five days before her husband; and as to the supposition of his lordship's self-destruction, the only ground for it was his strange mental condition, which was no worse than it had been for the last four years.

The woman Elspie was set at large by the authorities at Geneva, no one coming forward as her accuser. Mr. Pilson thought, and I believe he was right, that now both Lord and Lady Dunblane were dead it was better this terrible story should not be made public. It oozed out, in the course of time, as almost all such scandals do, but not through me. It was only when I found that all sorts of false or garbled versions of the circumstances were current in society that I ever mentioned what I knew, and that was years afterwards, when, in default of heirs, the title of Dunblane had become extinct.

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I am, Gentlemen, yours faithfully,

Surrey, May, 1860.

No. 331, 601.

LIST OF ARTICLES.—3 prs. stout twill men's drawers; 2 thick twill pillow cases; 12 long-cloth chemises; 2 yd. lace; 2 serge dress skirts, gored—one of them flounced; 1 evening dress skirt, ditto; 6 cambric tuckers complete; 2 prs. cloth trousers; 6 fine linen ladies' collars; 1 cloth walking skirt; 2 alpaca Swiss aprons; 2 silk dress shirts; 6 fine Irish shirt fronts, and pairs of wrists; 2 table-cloths; 5 sheets; 1 cloth book-cover; 2 braided d'Orsay; 11 children's gored flannel petticoats; 4 serge children's petticoats; 3 women's gored flannel petticoats—all these seamed, bound, and put into bands; 3 don. diaper napkins; 1 child's linen tunic; 3 balise carlines; 2 twilled small sheets; albatrig 1 petticoat and 3 shirt collars; 2 yds. satin ribbon, edged with blonde; 1 fine muslin Garibaldi tuckered; 2 lawn, and 2 cambric handkerchiefs; 2 check petticoats; 2 yd.; 1 ditto apron; 1 French muslin skirt; 4 yd.; 1 cloth ditto; linings for ditto; 2 serge French merino tunics, lined; 2 dressing jackets; altering 6 jacket bodices; making 3 new dresses.

"P.S.—I ought to say that the AVERAGE time that I have given to the Sewing Machine has been two hours a day."

"The Lodge, East Acton, Middlesex, July 8, 1860.

"Gentlemen.—I have cut the enclosed\* out of 'The Echo' and beg to state that I have used one of your machines for six years constantly, and have never had anything done to it, it works as well as ever. I am perfectly satisfied with it, and recommend your make to all my friends. I think the enclosed is a most unfair way of advertising.

\*The enclosure is a Paragraph Advertisement issued by a SINGLE THREAD CHAIN-STITCH Establishment.

Mrs. MARTINEAU.—"The machine has never got out of order in the smallest particular, and my experience in this respect is valuable, as I must have tried it more than most beginners, in consequence of my having to find out its management without the assistance of lessons. I had never even seen a machine of the kind before, and had no instruction beyond what is conveyed in the printed directions."

Mrs. R. BUTLER.—"I find it easily managed; in fact, though I had never used one before, on the first day I was able to get through a great deal of work, and I am sure that nothing could be more efficient for my work (that of dressmaking) than the machine I have."

Miss F. C. TALBOT.—"I had not seen a machine in use before purchasing mine, but with very little instruction I was soon able to do any kind of work—indeed, on the same day I have tacked fine muslin and stitched thick wincey cloth, and both were satisfactory."

Miss S. A. CULFAN.—"It is easy to work, can be learnt in a few hours—in fact, I had but one lesson—and does its work right well. I would not be without mine for many times its cost if I could not replace it."

THE WHEELER AND WILSON MFG. CO. have just issued a new *Pattern Card*, illustrative of the various adaptations here described; it contains samples of each kind of work at one view, and proves what is stated as to the capabilities of their machine. They will be happy to send it by post to anyone who will apply for it, and they are always glad to show the working of the machine to anyone who will call at either of their establishments.

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